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THE EFFECT OF GUIDED STRATEGIC PLANNING ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) LEARNERS' FLUENCY, ACCURACY AND LEXICAL RESOURCES IN SPEAKING

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Abstract: This study examined the effect of guided strategic planning on the fluency, accuracy and lexical resources in the speaking of Iranian intermediate English as a foreign language (EFL) learners as well as their awareness and use of pre-speaking strategies. For this purpose, 20 first-year students from the University of Mazandaran majoring in English Language and Literature were selected according to the general English proficiency test by Nelson and randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. A picture cued narrative speaking task and a pre-speaking strategies questionnaire were used as pre- and post-tests. The experimental group received 10 sessions of strategic planning coupled with pre-speaking strategy instruction. Analysis of data evidenced that students' overall scores in fluency, accuracy and lexical resources changed from pre-test to post-test. It was also found that speaking accuracy and fluency were most and least affected, respectively. Another finding was that the students' awareness and use of pre-speaking strategies increased as a result of the instruction. It is recommended that teachers and material developers couple strategic task planning with pre-speaking strategies so that improvements in speaking are observed.

Keywords: pre-speaking strategies, guided strategic planning, fluency, accuracy, lexical resources

INTRODUCTION

Speaking, which is one of the four major skills, seems to be mostly favoured as every English language learner aspires to be effective in communication with others in the oral mode. As Brown and Yule (1983) state, many language learners regard speaking as the criteria for knowing a language. Thus, it is important for teachers to teach students how to speak strategically for effective communication. The concept of strategy means a plan, step, or conscious action towards achievement of an objective (Oxford, 1990). Brown (1994) states that strategies are referred to as specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of

operation for achieving a particular end, or planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990), speaking strategies are important because they help learners "in negotiating meaning where either linguistic structures or sociolinguistic rules are not shared between a second language learner and a speaker of the target language." (p. 43) Fatemi and Nabizadeh Moghaddam (2012) found that learning strategy instruction had a positive effect on the speaking ability of Iranian EFL sophomores.

Nakatani (2005), in a study on the relationship between metacognitive awareness-raising training and oral communication strategy use, and Zhang and Goh (2006), in a study on the relationship between students' metacognitive awareness of speaking and strategy knowledge, found that learners benefited and improved their oral skills when metacognitive strategies were introduced in the training.

Task-Based Language Learning (TBLT) has become an important approach in recent years. Since the 1990s, tasks have been the focus of attention as a unit of analysis both in language teaching and learning as well as in syllabus design (Gilabert, 2007; Ortega, 2005). Planning is an inseparable part of spoken language use. That is, all speakers need to decide what to say and how to do it. (Ellis, 2005, p. 3) In TBLT, planning can be classified into two types: pre-task planning and within-task planning. (Ellis, 2005) Pre-task planning is subdivided into rehearsal and strategic planning. Strategic planning is a student's preparation of what the content is and how it is expressed for the task. It can be divided into guided planning, in which learners are guided in the planning phase about what and how to plan, and unguided planning, in which learners receive no guidance or advice in the planning phase.

Studies indicate that planning has a positive effect on fluency, complexity and accuracy in general (Skehan & Foster, 1999; Sanguran, 2001). Skehan and Foster (1997) reported that planners had greater fluency than non-planners. Accuracy can be described as the mastery of language forms and structures and the accurate use of them (Hamdan Salim Shahin, 2003). Ellis (1987) suggested that planning helped students use regular past tense correctly. Vocabulary knowledge is one of the important language components in which its impact on language fluency is undeniable. It serves as a means of expression and is "of critical importance to the typical language learner" (Coady & Huckin, 1997, p. 5). Cohen, Weaver and Li (1998, as cited in Nakatani & Goh, 2007) conducted an intervention study to investigate the effect of metacognitive strategy instruction on the development of speaking. Thirty-two foreign students of English in the US were taught to use metacognitive strategies for preparing to speak, self-monitoring during speaking and self-evaluation after speaking. They were also assigned three tasks, namely, self-description, story retelling, and city description as well as asked to make

checklists of their use of task specific strategies before, during and after these tasks. Analysis of data showed an improvement in speaking performance shown by the experimental group on the city description task. Mehrang and Rahimpour (2010) studied the effects of task structure and planning time on the oral performance of Iranian EFL learners in terms of accuracy, fluency, and complexity of 64 upper-intermediate learners of English as a foreign language. The results indicated that planning time had no effect on the accuracy and fluency of the learner performance. However, it led to more complex performances when participants performed the unstructured, complex task. In another more recent study, Tavakoli, Dastjerdi and Esteki (2011) examined the influence of explicit strategy instruction on the oral production of Iranian intermediate EFL learners in English by focusing on accuracy, fluency and complexity. According to the authors, some Iranian learners do not know how they should use timing for better speaking. They do not think about what aspects of grammar to use, and for picture-cued narrative tasks, they do not think about how to incorporate unfamiliar or new vocabulary and/or do not know how to fill pauses while speaking.

The Study

As speaking is a fundamental skill in oral communication, it seems that more focus is on the speaking product and less attention has been paid to the processes and strategies of speaking in Iranian EFL classrooms. The task-based teaching of language, hence, is most fruitful if it is guided, as students may not know how to do the tasks and need a guided plan for their performance. Actually, with all the merits found in strategic planning, it seems that to improve the speaking ability of EFL learners, strategic planning must be guided and thoughtfully carried out so that students do not go astray in their planning time. Therefore, the present study attempts to find out the effect of strategic planning for speaking coupled with pre-speaking strategies on three components of speaking, namely, fluency, accuracy and lexical resources of Iranian EFL learners. This study focuses on pre-speaking strategies that are useful for students before speaking. A greater awareness of strategies would allow learners to use a wider range of them effectively. For example, if the students are lost for words, they could use definitions or synonyms and/or antonyms. If these strategies are taught to students along with task planning time in strategic planning, students can organise the sentences or structure or vocabulary that are useful in speaking.

According to the above discussions, this study attempts to investigate the following research questions:

1. Is there any difference between the pre-test and post-test overall scores of speaking performance as a result of the instruction of pre-speaking strategies in guided strategic planning?
2. Which of the components of speaking (fluency, lexical resources, and accuracy) were most and least affected as a result of the instruction of pre-speaking strategies in guided strategic planning?
3. Does the instruction of pre-speaking strategies in guided strategic planning have any effect on increasing the awareness and use of pre-speaking strategies of Iranian EFL learners?

The following null hypotheses have been proposed for the above questions:

1. There will not be any difference between the pre-test and post-test overall scores of speaking performance as a result of the instruction of pre-speaking strategies in guided strategic planning.
2. None of the components of speaking ability (fluency, lexical resources, and accuracy) will be affected by instruction.
3. The instruction of pre-speaking strategies in guided strategic planning will not have any effect on increasing the awareness and use of pre-speaking strategies of Iranian EFL learners.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants in this study were first-year students of the English language and literature at the University of Mazandaran. First, 40 male and female students (29 females and 11 males) whose ages ranged from 18–20 consented to take part in this study voluntarily. Then, through administering the Nelson proficiency test, 20 learners who were of intermediate English proficiency level were selected. To select the intermediate level students, the researcher considered the scores within the range of 25–39, which included one standard deviation below and above the mean score (mean = 32 and standard deviation = 6.62). Later, they were randomly (using tables of random numbers) assigned to control and experimental groups (10 participants for each group).

Instruments

To carry out this study, the following instruments were employed:

A: Nelson General English proficiency test (1976, series 250): this instrument was used to select a homogeneous group of participants. It contained 50 items

that were used to assess grammar, vocabulary and the pronunciation knowledge of students. The test was piloted with 6 students, and the reliability was calculated to be 0.72, which seemed acceptable for the purposes of this study.
B: In this study, the main data collection instrument for speaking was a picture-cued narrative task in which a sequence of pictures were distributed to the students, and the students were expected to make a story out of them. To ensure the validity of the instrument, it was shown to two experts in the field who held MA degrees in teaching English as a foreign language and were already informed about the purpose of this study so that the researchers could obtain their best judgements. These two experts were also EFL teachers who had 4 to 5 years of teaching experience at English language institutes. They had passed 32 units of Master of Arts in TEFL courses in Iran. The pictures were selected based on the interest of the students as determined at the piloting stage by asking the students if they found the pictures interesting enough to develop a story about them. The selected pictures depicted a sequence of events and were of a reasonable cognitive load according to the experience of the researchers of this study. Cognitive load refers to the demands on working memory during problem solving, thinking and reasoning. (Sweller, 1988). It is generally believed that that people learn better when they can build on what they already understand. However, the more a person has to learn in a shorter amount of time, the more difficult it is to process that information in working memory.

C: Pre-speaking strategies questionnaire: this instrument contains 16 items. The instrument was adopted from Cohen et al. (1995) and adapted for the purpose of the study. The original instrument has three sections, which include the following: *Before you speak, While you are speaking,* and *After you speak*. For this study, only the *Before you speak* section was employed. The questionnaire was employed for pre-test and post-test phases. Eight students were selected randomly before taking the pre-test to answer to the questionnaire for the purpose of piloting the instrument. The reliability obtained for the questionnaire base on Cronbach's alpha was 0.84, which seemed suitable for the purposes of this study. (See the appendix for further details.)

D: Rating scale: For scoring the oral production of the students, an appropriate rating scale (IELTS Assessment Criteria) for speaking was employed. It was shown to two experts, who had already given their opinions about the picture-cued narrative tasks, to ensure it would meet the aims of the study and to get their comments on the scale selected. They were also informed about the nature of the study and the rating scale so that they would give their best judgments about the suitability of the rating scale for the purposes of this study. Finally, among the four criteria in the original instrument, the fluency and coherence, grammatical accuracy, and lexical resources criteria were selected as they were most suitable

for the purposes of this study. The fourth criteria, pronunciation, was ignored as it was not under investigation in this study.

Procedure

The following steps were taken to conduct the research.

First, the Nelson General English proficiency test was administered to 40 students. Twenty students scored between –1 and +1 standard deviation on the normal distribution curve (i.e., 25–39) and were considered to be intermediate English proficiency students. After this, the selected students were put randomly into the control and experimental groups, each containing ten students. To determine the speaking ability of the students, the picture-cued narrative speaking tasks were given to both groups of students. As for strategic planning, both groups received ten minutes time to think about the pictures and retell the story based on the picture-cued tasks. Immediately after these speaking tasks, the pre-speaking strategy questionnaire was distributed to each group as a retrospective measure of pre-speaking strategies. All of these activities were carried out at the pre-test stage. For the next session, both groups were given the same activities as in the pre-test stage. As in the pre-test stage, each group was given ten minutes to think about the pictures and retell the story based on the picture-cued tasks. The control group received no instruction on speaking strategies for how to speak. They were not guided on how to use the available time by using the pre-speaking strategies, either. The experimental group received ten sessions of instruction on pre-speaking strategies coupled with strategic planning. In other words, the experimental group received guided pre-task planning in the form of pre-speaking strategies. The pre-speaking strategies included predicting the appropriate grammar and accurate structure and using a wide range of vocabulary and strategies for new and unknown words. It also focused on pause fillers to reduce the number of silences and long hesitations, to decrease repair or repetition and to maintain coherence during narration. All strategy items were taught to the experimental group to enhance their speaking ability in the areas of accuracy, fluency and lexical resources. First, in this study, the five strategy instruction elements proposed by Winograd and Hare (1988, in Carrell, 1998) were employed. These elements included the following questions. a) What is the strategy?; b) Why should a strategy be learned?; c) How should a strategy be used?; d) When and where should the strategy be used?; e) How should a strategy use be evaluated?. The model is about the instruction of reading strategies, but it was adapted for the purpose of this study, and its framework was used for teaching speaking strategies. For the sake of instructing the pre-speaking strategies to the experimental group, four other pre-speaking strategies in which the original model was developed by Dörnyei (1995), Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991), and Willems (1987) were adapted for the study. The first is: A)

approximation, which involves using an alternative term that expresses the meaning of the target words as closely as possible (Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1994). The second is B) *circumlocution*, which is thinking about using synonyms, antonyms, explanation, or nonverbal communication for unknown vocabulary. It is viewed as the most important achievement strategy and a major component of strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). The third is C) *lexicalized fillers*, which are words or gambits used to fill pauses and to gain time to think in order to keep the communication channel open and maintain discourse when speakers face communication problems (Graham, 1997). The fourth is D) *preparing general outlines* such as using notes and keywords that are necessary during planning time and predicting the structure and grammar. After the treatment for the experimental group, both groups received post-tests. The design of the study can be represented as follows:

Control group: *Pre-tests + Strategic Planning + Post-tests*

Experimental group: *Pre-tests + Strategic Planning along with Speaking Strategy Instruction + Post-tests*

Explanations:

Pre-tests and Post-tests: (picture-cued narrative tasks + speaking strategy questionnaire)

Strategic planning: Ten minutes to think about picture-cued speaking tasks

For rating purposes, two non-native speaking teachers who once gave their opinions about the picture-cued narrative tasks and the IELTS rating scale judged the participants' performance by listening to the tapes and at the same time having the transcription at hand. They were trained on the scale components and how to measure students' performance. The scores of eight students announced by the two raters were correlated, and the inter-rater reliability index turned out to be 0.90, which was quite acceptable for this study. In the next step, the correlation coefficient of the scores announced by the two raters for each component of the speaking task for the two groups of students was calculated, and the results showed reliabilities of 0.98, 0.92, and 0.96 for pre-test accuracy, fluency and lexical resources, respectively, and reliabilities of 0.96, 0.91, and 0.99 for post-test accuracy, fluency and lexical resources, respectively.

As the correlation between the scores announced by the two raters was acceptable for the purpose of this study, only one of the two raters' reported scores was used for data analysis.

Data analysis

This study attempted to examine the effects of guided strategic planning on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' fluency, accuracy and lexical resources in speaking as well as their awareness and use of pre-speaking strategies. In this study, a picture-cued narrative speaking task and a pre-speaking strategy questionnaire were given as pre-tests and post-tests to students with an intermediate proficiency level divided into control and experimental groups. The results of the study are presented and analysed in relation to the research questions cited earlier. Some statistical operations were performed to answer the research questions and test the corresponding hypotheses.

Results for Question 1

The first research question addressed the difference between the overall scores on speaking from pre-test to post-test in the control and experimental groups. In response to this question, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was carried out on each dependent variable to determine for which measures the differences reached a significant level. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test is a non-parametric test used when comparing two related samples, matched samples, or repeated measurements on a single sample to assess whether their population mean ranks differ (i.e., it is a paired difference test). It can be used as an alternative to the paired Student's t-test, *t*-test for matched pairs, or the *t*-test for dependent samples when the population cannot be assumed to be normally distributed.

Therefore, the mean ranks and sum of ranks and significance level of speaking performance including accuracy, fluency and lexical resource from pre-test to post-test were considered. The minimum alpha for the confirmation of the research hypothesis was set at the 0.05 level. Descriptive statistics showed a mean score of 4.86 (for pre-test) and 6.76 (for post-test), and a standard deviation of .945 (for pre-test) and .648 (for post-test), for the overall score (accuracy, fluency and lexical resource) of the ten students in the experimental group. Comparison of the mean scores showed that the experimental group performed better in the post-test (mean=6.76) than in the pre-test (mean 4.86). Table 1 shows inferential statistics using the Signed-Rank Test for the students' scores in the experimental group.

Table 1. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for the overall score in experimental group

		N	Mean rank	Sum of rank	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-Post	Negative ranks	0	.00	.00	
	Positive ranks	0[a]	5.50	55.00	
	Ties	0[a]			
	Total	10			
PRE-POST overall score					.05

a. post-overall1 < pre_overall1
b. post-overall1 > pre_overall1
c. post-overall1 = pre_overall1

Table 2. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for the overall score in control group

		N	Mean rank	Sum of rank	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-post	Negative ranks	5[a]	3.80	19.00	
	Positive ranks	5[b]	7.20	36.00	
	Ties	0[c]			
	Total	10			
PRE-POST overall score					.37

a. post-overall1 < pre_overall1
b. post-overall1 > pre_overall1
c. post-overall1 = pre_overall1

The mean ranks of the overall score with respect to the control and experimental groups are presented in Table 2. The mean ranks of the experimental group were higher. The results of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, illustrated in Table 2, showed that there was a statistically significant difference (p <.05) between pre-test and post-test speaking scores in the experimental group. The mean of the post-test was greater than the pre-test. It indicated that the students performed better after the treatment sessions, and the null hypothesis for research question one, "there would not be any difference between the pre-test and post-test overall scores of speaking performance as a result of the instruction of pre-speaking strategies in guided strategic planning", was rejected.

Results for Question 2

The second research question investigated the most and least affected components of speaking (accuracy, lexical diversity and grammatical accuracy) as a result of the instruction. The picture-cued task in which students narrated the

story was given as a pre-test and a post-test. The two raters of the study rated the speaking performance according to the IELTS rating scale. As mentioned in the last section, the differences between pre- to post-test means were significant. The comparison of post-test scores for the experimental and control groups using Mann-Whitney Test are presented below. The Mann-Whitney Test is a non-parametric test alternative to the independent *t*-test. It is used to compare differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable is either ordinal or continuous but not normally distributed. It is also used when the participants are low in number.

To answer the second question, the differences for each dependent variable from pre-test to post-test were compared. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the students' scores in the experimental group.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group

Test	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
PRE accuracy	10	4.5	1.54	3	7
POST accuracy	10	6.9	.99	6	8
PRE vocab	10	4.8	.67	4	6
POST vocab	10	6.7	1.15	5	9
PRE fluency	10	5.1	1.37	4	8
POST fluency	10	6.7	1.05	5	8

Means, standard deviations, minimums and maximums for accuracy, lexical resources and fluency in the pre-test and post-test are displayed in Table 4. The mean scores of each variable suggested that all three variables showed differences from pre-test to post-test, but students' accuracy score improved more than the two other variables, and it can be claimed that accuracy was the most affected variable. Finally, the mean scores for fluency showed that students' performance in fluency was least affected.

The nonparametric test (Mann-Whitney Test) was carried out on each dependent variable to compare the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. The minimum alpha for the confirmation of the research hypothesis was set at the .05 level of significance. The mean rank and level of significance of the three speaking components (accuracy, fluency and lexical resource) are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Mann-Whitney Test

		N	Mean rank	Sig. (2-tailed)
POST fluency	Exp	10	13.6	
	Con	10	7.40	
	POST-fluency			.016
POST lexical	Exp	10	13.70	
	Con	10	7.30	
	POST-lexical			.013
POST accuracy	Exp	10	13.70	
	Con	10	7.30	
	POST-accuracy			.010

The mean scores of each component with respect to post-tests of the control and experimental groups are presented in Table 4. The mean score of the fluency component of the post-test of the experimental group was 13.60, whereas the mean score of the fluency component of the post-test of the control group was 7.40. The mean score of the vocabulary component for the experimental group was 13.70, whereas the mean score of the vocabulary component for the control group was 7.30. The mean score of the accuracy component of the experimental group was 13.70, whereas the mean score of the accuracy component of the control group was 7.30. The mean scores of the accuracy and vocabulary components were greater, and the mean scores of the fluency component were lower in the post-test of the experimental group.

The results of the Mann-Whitney Test, illustrated in Table 4, show that all three components were affected by the instruction, and there was a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between post-test scores of accuracy, vocabulary and fluency in the experimental group (accuracy: $p = .010 < .05$, vocabulary: $p = .013 < .05$ and fluency: $p = .016 < .05$) in comparison with the control group. Thus, the second null hypothesis predicting that none of the components of speaking ability (fluency, lexical resources, and accuracy) would be affected as a result of instruction was rejected.

Results for Question 3

The third research question investigated the effect of guided strategic planning on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' awareness and use of pre-speaking strategies. For this purpose, the nonparametric Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was run. To achieve this goal, first, descriptive statistics were obtained. Descriptive statistics showed a mean score of 2.68 (for pre-test) and 4.83 (for post-test) and a standard deviation of .138 (for pre-test) and .432 (for post-test) on the pre-speaking

strategies questionnaire for the ten students in the experimental group. By comparing the mean scores of the students, it was concluded that students' performance was better on the post-test (M = 4.83, SD = .432) than pre-test (M = 2.68, SD = .138).

In the following section, the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group are compared. Table 5 shows that the difference between the pre-test and post-test data for the experimental group were significant.

Table 5. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Tests for questionnaire in experimental group

		N	Mean rank	Sum of rank	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-post	Negative ranks	0a	.00	.00	
	Positive ranks	10b	5.50	55	
	Ties	0c			
	Total	10			
PRE-POST					.005

a. post-questionnaire < pre questionnaire
b. post-questionnaire > pre questionnaire
c. post-questionnaire = pre questionnaire

A significant difference between students' performance from the pre-test to the post-test was observed. The minimum alpha for the confirmation of the research hypothesis was set at 0.05. There was an increase in the students' awareness and use of pre-speaking strategies in the experimental group. Next, the comparison of the pre-test and post-test for the control group was made using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. As displayed in Table 6, the difference between pre-test and post-test data in the control group was not significant. Accordingly, the null hypothesis for the third research question, "the instruction of pre-speaking strategies in guided strategic planning does not have any effect on increasing the awareness and use of pre-speaking strategies of Iranian EFL learners", was rejected.

Table 6. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for questionnaire in control group

		N	Mean rank	Sum of rank	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-post	Negative ranks	6a	6.00	36	
	Positive ranks	3	3.00	39	
	Ties	1c			
	Total	10			
PRE-POST					.10

a. post control < pre control
b. post control > pre control
c. post control = pre control

The difference in students' performance from pre-test to post- test was considered. The minimum alpha for the confirmation of the research hypothesis was .05. Awareness and use of pre-speaking strategies did not change in the control group ($p = 1 > .05$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The first question of this study investigated the overall effect of using speaking strategies for better fluency, accuracy and lexical resources during performing tasks with guided strategic planning. Analysis of the data on the basis of the students' performance on the picture-cued task of oral narration showed that the students' overall scores in fluency, accuracy and lexical resources improved from pre-test to post-test. This research has also shown that as students develop awareness and use of pre-speaking strategies, fluency, accuracy and lexical resources will significantly improve. In previous studies, researchers such as Foster and Skehan (1996) and Skehan and Foster (1997) reported that planners had greater fluency than non-planners. Yuan and Ellis (2003) also discussed the influence of strategic planning on fluency. Crookes (1989) showed that students with 10 minutes of strategic planning had more complex sentences and a broader lexical range. However, findings in terms of accuracy have not been homogenous. Ellis (2004) believes these mixed findings are due to learners' differences in orientation towards accuracy and their proficiency level as well as different task types and particular grammatical features used in the studies. Some of the studies have reported positive effects of strategic planning on accuracy (e.g., Mehnert, 1998; Kawauchi, 2005), but their findings were not supported by studies such as Yuan and Ellis (2003) and Ellis and Yuan (2004).

Some studies found negative effects of metacognitive strategies on speaking performance. Huang (2010) found that the metacognitive speaking strategies of evaluation, planning, and setting goals were negatively correlated with speaking performance. Swain et al. (2009) also found negative correlations between metacognitive strategies and speaking performance. One reason for this might be that speaking performance requires fast speech processing mechanisms. In fact, among low proficiency level students or in difficult tasks, attention to metacognitive strategies might detract attention from producing fluent, complex, and accurate speech. Another reason might be that speaking strategies should be coupled with strategic planning to produce positive correlations with speaking performance.

Analysis of the data also showed the effects of guided strategic planning on all three components, but accuracy was most affected and fluency was least affected. Findings in the majority of studies have shown the effects of planning on

complexity and fluency of learners' language (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan & Foster, 1997; Wigglesworth, 1997; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999); Ortega (1999) showed that L2 Spanish students had faster speaking speed if they had planned strategically, and Wendel (1997, as cited in Ellis, 2005) found that the planners produced more syllables in a certain period of time and fewer pauses in two narrative tasks. In the present study, the analysis of data revealed differences in fluency from pre-test to post-test phases, but it was the least affected in comparison with two other components, namely, accuracy and lexical access.

Analysis of the data collected through the pre-speaking strategies questionnaire showed the effect of pre-speaking instructions on students' awareness and use of strategies in guided strategic planning. As previous studies have shown, speaking strategies are crucial because they help foreign language learners in negotiating meaning where either linguistic structures or sociolinguistic rules are not shared between a second language learner and a speaker of the target language (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Planning and its role in task-based performance are of both theoretical and practical interest to SLA researchers and teachers. "For SLA researchers, planning serves as one of studying what students attend to and what effect it has on the way they use language" (Rahimpour & Nariman, 2011). Planning is also important for language teachers as it is a relatively straightforward way to influence the type of language that learners produce. Despite this, just giving students time to plan for their speaking performance (i.e., strategic planning) is not enough, and they need to be taught how to make the best use of the allotted time through pre-speaking strategies. Actually, with all the merits found for strategic planning, it seems to improve the speaking ability of EFL learners strategic planning, which must be guided and thoughtfully carried out so that students do not go astray in their planning time. In fact, the basis of this study was on the advantages of coupling strategic planning with pre-speaking strategy instruction, as it was felt this would improve students' awareness and use of pre-speaking strategies and their speaking performance.

In this way, in guided strategic planning, the teacher gives the students the necessary help for a more fluent, accurate and lexically rich and appropriate speaking ability. It is recommended that language teachers place more importance on the combination of strategic task planning with instruction of pre-speaking strategies. It is also recommended that material developers implement pre-speaking strategies in pre-task planning so that students learn practically how to overcome their speaking problems in different areas of speaking, such as lexical resources, fluency, and accuracy.

Like many classroom studies, this study had several limitations. First, the number of students in the experimental and control groups was low (ten students in each group). It is recommended that future researchers consider using more participants for increasingly valid findings. A second limitation is that the study was carried out with intermediate proficiency level students. It would be interesting to find out if proficiency level will affect the findings. Furthermore, in this study, only narrative tasks were given to students. It would be an area for further research to find out the effects of different task types on the performance of students when they are given strategic planning coupled with pre-speaking strategy instruction.

APPENDIX A

Pre-speaking Strategies Questionnaire

Before I speak:

1. I identify the goal and purpose of the task: what is it I am to learn in this exercise?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

2. I ask for clarification of the task if I am unsure of its goal, purpose, or how I am to do it.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

3. I activate background knowledge; what do I already know about this situation/task?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

4. I relate the task to a similar situation; I make associations.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

5. I predict the vocabulary I will need. I make word maps, groupings.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

6. I think of how I might use too many words for vocabulary I do not know. I think of synonyms, antonyms, explanation, or non-verbal communication that can be a substitute.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

7. I predict the structures (grammar) I will need.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

8. I review similar tasks in my textbook.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

9. I transfer sounds and structures from previously learned material to the new situation.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

10. I predict the difficulties I might encounter.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

11. I organize my thoughts.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

12. I prepare a general outline (e.g., using notes and keywords, drawing pictures).

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

13. I predict what the other party is going to say.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

14. I rehearse (I practice silently, act out in front of a mirror, or record myself and listen).

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

15. I cooperate in all areas if it is a group task.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

16. I encourage myself to speak out, even though I might make some mistakes.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always

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